

**OASIS**  
Statewide Prevention Conference 2006  
Desmond Hotel & Conference Center  
15 November 2006  
Albany, New York

*Incorporating Prevention Principles into Our Life: Balance, Self Care, &  
Wellness*

**“Spirituality – In Our Fast Pace World”**

&

*Do No Harm: Preventing Iatrogenic Effects in Groups*

**“First and Always Do No Harm”**

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Good Afternoon and thank you for inviting me to share with you some thoughts about how to maintain balance, how to heal your self, and how to PREVENT dis-ease and sickness. The simplest answer is to say to you – no techniques and strategies, in the world can replace your authentic heart. You are the key, which unlocks the door to a wounded heart.

How can you and I keep our selves clear enough to remember why we are doing this holy work? It is easy to be carried away with mandates, budgets, supervisors, no supervisors, staff training, no training, family, children, partners, suicide, schools, and questions:

How can I prevent that, what am I preventing, who am I, why am I doing this, is there any point? I am tired, I feel lost, disconnected.

We realize we have disconnected from our source. We have forgotten that our work is service. We have forgotten that what we do is heal.

The frenetic pace has spun us so far out, that we do not know how we got to where we find ourselves.

Cell phones, faxes, computers, blackberries, I pods, digital cameras, internet, instant gratification – tools that give us the ability to stay in touch more efficiently. The question is -- are we staying in touch?

We find ourselves doing, saying and behaving in ways that are the antithesis of creating safe, loving spaces to heal the wounded heart. The core of prevention work is strategies and techniques that help us restore individuals, communities, schools, families, and environments, to health. It means when we are successful we actually make it impossible (or at least near impossible) for substance abuse and addiction to take root.

Have you ever had the thought – I am doing the best I can and it just does not seem to be enough? I need to replenish myself. I need to sit still for a bit and ask myself – how do I plug back into the source – the reason that I wanted to serve. Service is LOVE. Balance is LOVE. Self-care is LOVE. Wellness is LOVE.

We live in a world, that is abundant and we are starving.

We live in a world, that is magical and we are without hope.

We live in a world, beyond our parents dreams and we are still wanting.

It is so easy to be distracted from what is going on inside of each of us.

Distractions are a necessary part of life – although on occasion we need to ask ourselves is this distraction, serving me well? Is it giving me what I want, what I need, to live a loving and fulfilling life?

LOVE is our ability to stand outside of ourselves and consider the meaning of our actions, the complexity of our motives and the impact we have on the world around us. To admit, being human, we often fail to live up to our own philosophy, but keep trying nevertheless.

LOVE challenges us to be and give our best selves.

What are the Principles of Wellness?

- Wellness is not just physical health
- Wellness is about balance
- Wellness is about variety
- Wellness is not about blame
- Wellness is about pleasure

- Wellness is about living in the moment
- Wellness recognizes that perception is as important as reality
- Wellness is not about numbers
- Wellness is about connecting the mind, body, and spirit
- Wellness is about awakening the healer within

Being well is the ability to know how to protect ourselves, when needed.

Setting personal boundaries is essential for us to remain well enough to provide for those that depend on us.

The purpose of having boundaries is to protect and take care of ourselves.

We need to be able to tell other people when they are acting in ways that are not acceptable to us. A first step is starting to know that we have a right to protect and defend ourselves, not only the right, but also the duty to take responsibility for how we allow others to treat us.

Emotions do not define us; they are a form of internal communication that helps us to understand ourselves. They are a vital part of our being - as a component of the whole. We must own the feeling. It is important to state what we feel. By stating the feeling out loud, we are affirming that we have a right to feelings. We are affirming it to ourselves - and taking

responsibility for owning our reality and ourselves. It is vitally important to own our own voice, to own our right to speak up for ourselves.

Setting boundaries is not manipulation - although some people will say they are setting boundaries, when in fact they are attempting to manipulate. The difference between setting a boundary in a healthy way and manipulating is when **we set a boundary we let go of the outcome.**

It is impossible to have a healthy relationship with someone who has no boundaries, with someone who cannot communicate directly, and honestly. Learning how to set boundaries is a necessary step in learning to be a friend to ourselves. It is our responsibility to take care of ourselves - to protect ourselves when it is necessary. It is impossible to learn to be Loving to ourselves without owning our self - and owning our rights and responsibilities.

It helps to take stock of where we are -- a 10,000-mile check-up. [Give a few examples of self-assessment scale.]

## **Self-Care Assessment**

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

- 3 = I do this well (e.g. frequently)
- 2 = I do this OK (e.g. occasionally)
- 1 = I barely or rarely do this
- 0 = I never do this
- ? = This never occurred to me

### **Physical Self-Care [need quiet time, meditation, prayer, a walk]**

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- Eat healthily
- Exercise
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when sick
- Get massages
- Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other fun physical activity
- Take time to be sexual - with myself, with a partner
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes I like
- Take vacations
- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones
- Other:

### **Psychological Self-Care [support, friends, family, connect w/self, evaluate]**

- Make time for self-reflection
- Notice my inner experience - listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
- Have my own personal psychotherapy
- Write in a journal
- Read literature that is unrelated to work
- Do something at which I am not expert or in charge
- Attend to minimizing stress in my life
- Engage my intelligence in a new area, e.g., go to an art show, sports event, theatre
- Receive from others
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

### **Emotional Self-Care [be gentle with self, remember tears heal]**

- Spend time with others whose company I enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in my life
- Give myself affirmations, praise myself
- Love myself
- Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- Allow myself to cry

- Find things that make me laugh
- Express my outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- Other:

**Spiritual self-care [make a choice to walk in fear or walk in love]**

- Make time for reflection
- Spend time in nature
- Find a spiritual connection or community
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish my optimism and hope
- Be aware of non-material aspects of life
- Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- Be open to not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Have experiences of awe
- Contribute to causes in which you believe
- Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music
- Other:

**Workplace or Professional Self-Care [collaboration, cooperation, don't sell your soul, don't compromise your integrity]**

- Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Set limits with clients and colleagues
- Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
- Have a peer support group
- Balance within my work-life and workday

**Overall Balance**

- Balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization. Norton.

What to do, what to do --- PREVENTION is Change work it is  
transformational work:

☀ Doubt into faith

☀ Fear into trust

☀ Self pity into humility

☀ Anger into acceptance

☀ Guilt into peace

☀ Depression into serenity

We must be able to do our own transformational work if we are to be of  
service to another.

Remember you are the KEY to the WOUNDED HEART

The KEY is LOVE.

## **SLOW DANCE**

Have you ever watched kids on a merry go round?  
Or listened to the rain tapping on the ground?  
Have you ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight?  
Or gazed at the sun into the fading light?  
You'd better slow down  
Don't dance so fast  
Time is short  
The music won't last

Do you run through each day on the fly?  
When you ask "How are You?"  
Do you hear the reply?  
When the day is done, do you lie in your bed  
    with a hundred chores running through your head?  
You'd better slow down  
Don't dance so fast  
The music won't last

Ever told your child we'll do it tomorrow?  
Then in your haste, not see his sorrow  
Ever lost touch, let a good friendship die because you  
    never had time to call and say "Hi".  
You'd better slow down  
Don't dance so fast  
Time is short  
The music won't last

If my parting has left a void then fill it with remembered joy  
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,  
Oh yes, these things I too will miss

Be not burdened with time of sorrow.  
I wish you the sunshine, lollipops and rainbows of tomorrow  
My life's been full, I savored much  
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.

When you run so fast to get somewhere  
You miss half the fun of getting there.  
When you worry and hurry through your day,  
It is like an unopened gift . . . thrown away.

Life is not a race  
Do take it slower  
Hear the music  
Before, the song is over.

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Who can pronounce the word, “iatrogenic”? Okay, now what does it mean?

I had to look it up. It comes from two words – iatros – means physician in Greek and genic – means induced by, therefore combined it means physician induced. It is any adverse effect associated with any practitioner or treatment strategy, technique or program.

The literature states in brief that iatrogenic effects occur when participants exhibit an increase in the harmful attitudes and behaviors that a prevention or intervention program is trying to decrease. A phenomenon bound to surface within any program. In my opinion, it signals a strategy or technique or program format needs to be re-evaluated and revisions and alterations made to better service our clients.

It is our responsibility **first and always, do no harm**, at least intentionally.

The literature cites iatrogenic effects in a variety of settings. To name a few:

- ☯ Methadone maintenance programs
- ☯ Adolescent groups
- ☯ Diverse treatment programs
- ☯ Pain and drug therapy programs
- ☯ School base programs

Some researchers view stigma as an iatrogenic effect.

As prevention practitioners, we are to provide service that allows optimal functioning of the clients we are serving.

Minimizing iatrogenic effects in prevention settings requires focusing on such factors as the degree of program structure, the staff/client ration, staff training and the mix of clients that participate in the program. Supervision of staff is also a major factor of preventing iatrogenic effects.

A few other variables that need consideration, if we want to limit, lower this phenomenon are:

- ☯ Consistency – staff training and supervision
- ☯ Role modeling – the importance of staff self care

- ☯ Communication authentic, clear and direct
- ☯ Dealing with issues of power and control
- ☯ Ongoing assessment and evaluation of strategies and techniques
- ☯ Diversity and inclusion issues, keeping everyone at the table
- ☯ Positive and attainable treatment planning
- ☯ Adolescents – understanding stage of development
- ☯ Clear goals and objectives for the prevention program
- ☯ We must not be afraid to change our minds
- ☯ We must be cautious with labels

[Open it up for dialogue – what do the participants want.]

Leave them with the following quote:

*Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is a process;  
working together is success.  
Henry Ford*

Whether in business or personal relationships, what makes working together so difficult is the individual need to be right and to have things our way. As long as we have a position to hold on to, we cannot come together or work together. If we are not willing to bend, we will somehow get in the way. We must get clear about what we are doing, why we are doing it, and whom we are working with. Only with an honest examination of our motives and intent can we surrender to any working or loving process. If we enter any collective agreement for only personal goals and with mental garbage, the stability of the group is jeopardized by our dishonest foundation. If we come together in honesty, work together in clarity, we can stay together with respect and meet any goal successfully.

*I respect myself enough to respect the working process.*

[Taken from: ACTS OF FATIH Daily Meditations for People of Color by Iyanla Vanzant]

